

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (original) A method of operating a communications network, including automatically varying at a customer terminal, depending on network loading as detected at the customer terminal, a tariff for network usage by the customer terminal.

2. (original) A method according to claim 1, including detecting at the customer terminal a network performance parameter which depends on network loading, and varying the tariff depending on the network performance parameter.

- 3 (original) A method according to claim 2, in which the network is a packet network and the network performance parameter is the number of packets lost in transmission between a data source and the customer terminal.

4. (original) A method according to claim 1, including detecting a congestion signal at the customer terminal and varying the tariff in response to the congestion signal.

5. (original) A method according to claim 4, including reading a congestion signal at the customer terminal from a data packet received at the customer terminal.

6. (previously presented) A method according to claim 4, including generating a congestion signal at a router in the network in response to the detection of congestion at the router.

7. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, including making a first relatively smaller increase in the tariff when congestion is first detected, and making at least one further, relatively larger increase, if the congestion persists.

8. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, including programming a decision agent at the customer terminal with user-determined price criteria, and comparing a price calculated using the tariff with the said price criteria.

9. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, including distributing a tariff algorithm via the communications network to a plurality of terminals and calculating at each terminal, using the tariff, a charge for

network usage by the terminal.

10. (currently amended) A method according to claim 9, further comprising steps, carried out by ~~the~~a network operator, of:

intermittently sampling traffic between ~~a~~the customer terminal and the network, and as part of the sampling, recording network loading affecting the customer terminal; and

for the sampled traffic, comparing a charge calculated by the customer terminal and an expected charge and detecting thereby any discrepancy.

11. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, in which when the customer terminal detects congestion in data transmitted to the customer terminal from a data source via the network, the customer terminal returns a congestion notification signal to the data source.

12. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, including at a customer terminal, selecting a period of time for which the tariff is to be fixed and paying a premium depending on the duration of the said period.

13. (original) A method of operating a communications network including applying to customer terminals a tariff for network usage, varying the

tariff with time; at a customer terminal, selecting a period of time for which the tariff is to be fixed; and paying a premium depending on the duration of the said period.

14. (original) A communications network including:
means for detecting network loading locally at a customer terminal; and
means responsive to the said means for detecting arranged automatically to
vary a tariff for network usage by the customer terminal.

15. (original) A customer terminal for use in a communications
network, the customer terminal including:
means for detecting loading of a network to which, in use, the customer
terminal is connected;
means responsive to the said means for detecting and arranged
automatically to vary a tariff for network usage by the customer terminal.

16. (previously presented) A customer terminal for use in a
communications network, the customer terminal including one or more processors
arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:
detecting loading of resources in a network to which the customer terminal
is connected; and

automatically varying in dependence on the detected loading a tariff for network usage by the customer terminal.

17. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 13~~claim 1, in which the tariff is varied only if the terminal fails to reduce its output in response to detected congestion.